



LIII

AN-NAJM

النَّجْمِ



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INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah derives its name from the very first word *wan-Najm*. This title also does not relate to the subject-matter, but is a name given to the Sūrah as a symbol.

Period of Revelation

According to a Tradition related by Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd and Nasā'ī, on the authority of Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, the first Sūrah in which a verse requiring the performance of a *sajdah* (prostration) was sent down, is Sūrah An-Najm. The parts of this *Ḥadīth* which have been reported by Aswad bin Yazīd, Abū Ishāq and Zuhair bin Mu'āwiyah from Ḥaḍrat Ibn Mas'ūd indicate that this is the first Sūrah of the Qur'ān, which the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had publicly recited before an assembly of the Quraish (and according to Ibn Mardūyah, in the Ka'bah) in which both the believers and the disbelievers were present. At the end, when he recited the verse requiring the performance of a *sajdah* and fell down in prostration, the whole assembly also fell down in prostration with him,

and even those chiefs of the polytheists who were in the forefront of the opposition to the Holy Prophet (peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) could not resist falling down in prostration. Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him) says that he saw only one man, Umayyah bin Khalaf, from among the disbelievers, who did not fall down in prostration but took a little dust and rubbing it on his forehead said that that was enough for him. Later, as Ibn Mas'ūd relates, he saw this man being killed in the state of disbelief.

Another eye-witness of this incident is Ḥaḍrat Muṭṭalib bin Abī Wada'ah, who had not yet become a Muslim. Nasā'ī and Musnad Ahmad contain his own words to the effect: "When the Holy Prophet recited the Sūrah An-Najm and performed the *sajdah* and the whole assembly fell down in prostration along with him, I did not perform the *sajdah*. Now to compensate for the same whenever I recite this Sūrah I make sure never to abandon its performance."

Ibn Sa'd says that before this, in the Rajab of the 5th year of Prophethood, a small group of the Companions had emigrated to Abyssinia. Then, when in the Ramaḍān of the same year this incident took place the news spread that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had recited Sūrah An-Najm publicly in the assembly of the Quraish and the whole assembly, including the believers as well as the disbelievers, had fallen down in prostration with him. When the emigrants to Abyssinia heard this news they formed the impression that the disbelievers of Makkah had become Muslims. Thereupon, some of them returned to Makkah in the Shawwāl of the 5th year of Prophethood, only to learn that the news was wrong and the conflict between Islam and disbelief was raging as furiously as before. Consequently, the second emigration to Abyssinia took place, in which many more people left Makkah.

Thus, it becomes almost certain that this Sūrah was revealed in the Ramaḍān of 5th year of Prophethood.

Historical Background

The details of the period of revelation as given above point to the conditions in which this Sūrah was revealed. During the first five years of his appointment as a Prophet, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had been extending invitation to Allah's Religion

by presenting the Divine Revelations before the people only in private and restricted meetings and assemblies. During this whole period he could never have a chance to recite the Qur'ān before a common gathering openly, mainly because of the strong opposition and resistance from the disbelievers. They were well aware of how magnetic and captivating was the Holy Prophet's personality and his way of preaching and how impressive were the Revelations of the Qur'ān. Therefore, they tried their best to avoid hearing it themselves and to stop others also from hearing it and to suppress his invitation by false propaganda by spreading every kind of suspicion against him. For this object, on the one hand, they were telling the people that Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had gone astray and was now bent upon misleading others as well; on the other, they would raise an uproar whenever he tried to present the Qur'ān before the people so that no one could know what it was for which he was being branded as a misled and misguided person.

Such were the conditions when the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) suddenly stood up one day to make a speech in the sacred precincts of the Ka'bah, where a large number of the Quraish had gathered together. Allah at that time made him deliver this discourse, which we have now in the form of the Sūrah An-Najm with us. Such was the intensity of the impression that when the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) started reciting it the opponents were so completely overwhelmed that they could not think of raising any disorder, and when at the conclusion he fell down in prostration, they too fell down in prostration along with him. Later they felt great remorse at the weakness they had involuntarily shown. The people also started taunting them to the effect that whereas they had been forbidding others to listen to the Qur'ān, that day not only had they themselves listened to it, with complete absorption, but had even fallen down in prostration along with Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). At last, they had to invent a story in order to get rid of the people's taunt and ridicule. They said: *"After he had recited afara'ait-ul-Lāta wal-'Uzzā wa Manāt ath-thālitha-al-ukhrā, we heard from Muḥammad the words: tilk-al-gharāniqatal-'ulā, wa anna shafā'at-u-hunna latarjā: 'They are exalted goddesses: indeed, their intercession may be expected.' From this we understood that Muḥammad had*

returned to our faith." As a matter of fact, only a mad person could think that in the context of this Sūrah the sentences they claimed to have heard could have any place and relevance. (For details, please see E.N.'s 96 to 101 of Sūrah Al-Hajj).

Subject-Matter and Topics

The theme of the discourse is to warn the disbelievers of Makkah about the error of the attitude that they had adopted towards the Qur'an and the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The discourse starts in a way as if to say: "Muḥammad is neither deluded nor gone astray, as you are telling others in your propaganda against him, nor has he fabricated this teaching of Islam and its message, as you seem to think he has. In fact, whatever he is presenting is nothing but Revelation which is sent down to him. The verities that he presents before you, are not the product of his own surmise and speculation but realities of which he himself is an eye-witness. He has himself seen the Angel through whom this knowledge is conveyed to him. He has been directly made to observe the great Signs of his Lord: whatever he says is not what he has himself thought out but what he has seen with his own eyes. Therefore, your disputing and wrangling with him is just like the disputing and wrangling of a blind man with a man of sight over a thing which the blind man cannot see but he can see."

After this, three things have been presented in their successive order:

First, the listeners have been made to understand that: "The religion that you are following is based on mere conjecture and invented ideas. You have set up a few goddesses like Lat and Manāt and 'Uzzā as your deities, whereas they have no share whatever in divinity. You regard the angels as the daughters of Allah, whereas you regard a daughter as disgraceful for your own selves. You think that these deities of yours can influence Allah in your favour, whereas the fact is that all the angels together, who are stationed closest to Allah, cannot influence Him even in their own favour. None of such beliefs that you have adopted, is based on knowledge and reason, but are wishes and desires for the sake of which you have taken some whims as realities. This is a grave error. The right and true religion is that which is in conformity to the reality, and the reality is never subject to the people's wishes and

desires so that whatever they may regard as a reality and truth should become the reality and truth. Speculation and conjecture cannot help to determine as to what is according to the truth and what is not; it is knowledge. When that knowledge is presented before you, you turn away from it, and brand the one who tells you the truth as misguided. The actual cause of your being involved in this error is that you are heedless of the Hereafter. Only this world is your goal. Therefore, you have neither any desire for the knowledge of reality, nor you bother to see whether the beliefs you hold are according to the truth or not.

Secondly, the people have been told that: Allah is the Master and Sovereign of the entire Universe. The righteous is he who follows His way, and the misguided he who has turned away from His way. The error of the misguided and the righteousness of the righteous are not hidden from Him. He knows whatever everyone is doing; He will requite the evil with evil and the good with good. The final judgement will not depend on what you consider yourself to be, and on tall claims you make of your purity and chastity but on whether you are pious or impious, righteous or un-righteous, in the sight of God. If you refrain from major sins, He in His mercy will overlook your minor errors.

Thirdly, a few basic principles of the true Religion which had been presented hundreds of years before the revelation of the Qur'ān in the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses have been re-iterated so that the people did not remain involved in the misunderstanding that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had brought some new and novel religion, but they should know that these are the fundamental truths which the former Prophets of Allah have always been presenting in their respective ages. Besides, the same Books have been quoted to confirm the historical facts that the destruction of the 'Ād and the Thamūd and of the people of the Prophets Noah and Lot was not the result of accidental calamities, but Allah has destroyed them in consequence of the same wickedness and rebellion from which the disbelievers of Makkah were not inclined to refrain and desist in any case.

After presenting these themes and discourses the Sūrah has been concluded, thus: "The Hour of Judgement has approached near at hand, which no one can avert. Before the occurrence of that Hour you are

being warned through Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Qur'an in the like manner as the former people had been warned before. Now, is it this warning that you find novel and strange? which you mock and ridicule? which you turn away from and cause disorder so that no one else also is able to hear what it is? Don't you feel like weeping at your folly and ignorance? Abandon this attitude and behaviour, bow down to Allah and serve Him alone!"

This was that impressive conclusion hearing which even the most hardened deniers of the Truth were completely overwhelmed, and when after reciting these verses of Divine Word the Holy Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) fell down in prostration, they too could not help falling down in prostration along with him.



وَالْتَجَوَّزْ إِذَا هَوَىٰ^١ مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ^٢ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ^٣
 إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ^٤ عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ^٥ ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ^٦ وَهُوَ
 بِالْأَفْئِ الْاَعْلَىٰ^٧ نَأْتُو دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى^٨ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ^٩ فَأَوْحَىٰ
 إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ^{١٠} مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ^{١١} أَفَتَسْمُرُونَ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ^{١٢}
 وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ^{١٣} عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ^{١٤} عِنْدَ مَا جَنَّهَ الْمَأْوَىٰ^{١٥}
 إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ^{١٦} مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَىٰ^{١٧} لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ
 رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ^{١٨} أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ اللَّتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ^{١٩} وَسَوَاءٌ الثَّالِثَةُ الْأُخْرَىٰ^{٢٠} أَكْثَرُ
 الذَّكَرِ وَلَهُ الْأُنْثَىٰ^{٢١} تِلْكَ إِذْ أَمْسَمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَنْ يَنْسَاءَ سَتِثْنُمَا
 أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مِمَّا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا
 تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ الْهُدَىٰ^{٢٢} هَامِرٌ لِلْإِنْسَانِ مَا كَتَبَ^{٢٣}
 وَلِلَّهِ الْأَخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَىٰ^{٢٤} وَكَثُرَ مِنْ مَلَائِكَةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ لَا تُعْنِي شُعَابُهُمْ يُشَاءُ
 إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُرْضَىٰ^{٢٥} إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
 بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيَسَمُّونَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْإِنْسَىٰ^{٢٦} وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ
 يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ الظَّنُّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا^{٢٧} فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْ
 مَنْ تَوَلَّى لَا عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَوْ يُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا^{٢٨} ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِنَ
 الْعِلْمِ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ^{٢٩} وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ^{٣٠}

LIII

AN-NAJM

النجم

Verses: 62

Revealed at Makkah

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

By the Star¹ when it set, your companion² is neither gone astray 1-12
 nor deluded.³ He does not speak of his own desire; it is but a
 Revelation which is sent down to him.⁴ One mighty in power has taught
 him,⁵ who is endowed with great wisdom.⁶ He stood poised in front
 when he was on the uppermost horizon.⁷ Then he drew near and hung
 suspended above, two bow-lengths away or even closer.⁸ Then he
 revealed to the servant of Allah whatever he had to reveal.⁹ The heart
 belied not what he saw.¹⁰ Do you then dispute with him concerning
 what he sees (with the eyes)?

And he saw him once again by the farthest lote-tree, nearby 13-18
 which is the Garden of Repose.¹¹ At that time the lote-tree was covered
 with that which covered it.¹² The sight was neither dazzled nor it
 exceeded the limit,¹³ and he saw of the greatest Signs of his Lord.¹⁴

Now tell: Have you ever pondered over the reality of this Lāt, 19-25
 and this 'Uzzā, and another, the third goddess, Manāt?¹⁵ Are the sons
 for you and the daughters for Allah?¹⁶ This would indeed be an unfair
 division! These are nothing but mere names which you and your
 forefathers have invented. Allah has sent down no authority for them.¹⁷
 The fact is that the people are following mere conjecture and the lusts
 of their souls,¹⁸ even though right guidance has come to them from their
 Lord.¹⁹ Is it that whatever man desires should become the truth for
 him?²⁰ To Allah belongs the present and the Hereafter.

How many an angel is there in the heavens! Their intercession 26-28
 can avail nothing until Allah permits it in favour of whomever He wills
 and is pleased with.²¹ But those who do not believe in the Hereafter,

name the angels with the names of goddesses,²² although they have no knowledge of this. They follow mere conjecture,²³ and conjecture can avail nothing against the Truth.

1. In the original the word "*an-najm*" has been used. Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid and Sufyān Thaurī opine that it implies the Pleides. Ibn Jarīr and Zamakhsharī have held this same interpretation as preferable, for in Arabic when the word *an-najm* is used absolutely it usually implies the Pleides. Suddī says that it implies Venus; and Abū 'Ubaidah, the grammarian, holds that here the word *an-najm* has been used generically so as to express this idea: "When the day dawned, and the stars set." In view of the context we are of the opinion that this last interpretation is more preferable.

2. "Your Companion" implies the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be peace) and the addressees are the Quraish. The word *Ṣāhib* as used in the original means a friend, a companion, a close associate. Here, making mention of the Holy Prophet by the word *Ṣāhib-u-kun* (your Companion) instead of "Our Messenger" is very meaningful. This is meant to make the people of the Quraish realize: "The person being mentioned is no stranger to you: he is not an outsider whom you may not be knowing or recognizing already. He is a man of your own clan and tribe; he lives and moves among you; even your children know who and what he is, what is his character, what are his dealings, what are his ways and habits and characteristics, and how he has passed his life among you so far. If some one of you were to say an improbable thing about him, there would be a thousand men among you who knew him, who could see for themselves whether what was said actually applied to him or not."

3. This is the thing for which an oath has been sworn by the setting star or stars. "Going astray" means a person's adopting a wrong way being unaware of the right way, and "being deluded" means his adopting the wrong way knowingly and consciously. The verse means: "Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) is a well-known man among you. Your accusation that he has gone astray, or is misguided, is utterly wrong. In fact, he is neither gone astray nor misguided." Here, the propriety of swearing by the setting stars is that in the darkness of the starry night a person cannot see the things of his surroundings clearly, and from their vague appearances can form wrong judgements about them, e.g. he may take a tree for a ghost in the dark, a string for a snake, a rock in the sand for a beast of prey. But when the stars have set and the day has dawned, everything appears before man in its real form and shape, and there remains no doubt whatever about the reality of anything. The same is the case also of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) among you. His life and personality is not hidden in darkness, but is manifest like the bright dawn.

You are aware that this "companion of yours" is a right-minded, wise and sagacious man. How can somebody from among the Quraish have the misunderstanding that he has gone astray? You also know how well-intentioned and honest and righteous person he is. How can one of you form the view that he has knowingly adopted a crooked way not only for himself but has started inviting others also to the same falsehood?

4 It means this: "The things for which you accuse him of having gone astray or been misled and deceived, have neither been fabricated by himself nor motivated by any selfish desire on his part, but they have been sent down, and are being sent down, to him by God. He did not intend to become a Prophet of his own desire so that he might have laid a claim to Prophethood in order to satisfy his desire, but when Allah appointed him to that office through Revelation, then only did he rise to preach his mission and to tell you that he had been appointed God's Messenger to you. Likewise, this invitation to Islam, this teaching of the doctrine of *Tauhid*, this news about the gathering together of all mankind on the Day of Resurrection and their accountability, the truths that he is presenting about the Universe and Man and the principles of leading a pure life, are not a philosophy propounded by himself, but the knowledge of all this has been bestowed on him by Revelation. Likewise, this Qur'an that he recites before you, is also not of his own composition but it is Divine Word which is sent down to him by Revelation."

Here, the question arises. To which of the words spoken by the Holy Prophet do Allah's Words: "He does not speak of his own desire; it is only a Revelation which is sent down to him," apply? Do they apply to everything that he spoke, or to some of his words and not to others? The answer is: As far as the Qur'an is concerned, the Divine Words apply to it most completely. As for the other words, apart from the Qur'an, which the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) spoke, they could inevitably be of three kinds:

First, those words which he employed for preaching religion and inviting others to Allah, and for explaining the themes, teachings and commands of the Qur'an, or for giving admonition and instruction to the people to fulfil the object for which the Qur'an was revealed. In this regard, obviously nobody can have the doubt that, God forbid, he fabricated these things from his own mind. In these matters, his position, in fact, was of the official interpreter of the Qur'an and of Allah's authorised representative. Although these things were not revealed to him literally as the Qur'an was revealed, yet these were necessarily based on the same knowledge that he had been given by Revelation. The only difference between the Qur'an and these was that the Qur'an, both in word and in meaning, was entirely from Allah, and in these other things the meanings were those taught by Allah and the words those which he himself employed to express those meanings. On the basis of this very distinction, the Qur'an has been described as *wahī-milī* (manifest

Revelation, and the Holy Prophet's other sayings as *wahî-khaffî* (concealed Revelation,

The second kind of the words were those which the Holy Prophet spoke in connection with the struggle of raising Allah's Word and his services for establishing Islam. In this regard, he had to perform countless duties of different kinds as the leader and guide of the Muslim community. In this many a time he took counsel with his Companions as well, and followed their advice instead of his own view. On being asked he sometimes told them that he was expressing a particular view not under Allah's command but as his personal opinion, and on several occasions it so happened that he said something on the basis of his own opinion and later an instruction came down against it from Allah. None of the things of this nature that he said or did could be based on a selfish motive. As for the question whether these sayings were based on Divine inspiration, the answer is that except for the things in regard to which he made it explicit that they were not based on Divine command, or about which he took counsel with his Companions and accepted their advice, or with regard to a thing against which Allah sent down an instruction after he had said or done something on the basis of his personal judgement, all other things were based on concealed Revelation (*wahî-khaffî*) just like the things of the first kind. For the office of the leader and guide of the Islamic Movement and the chief of the believing community and the ruler of the Islamic State, which he held, was not self-invented or bestowed by the people, but he had been appointed to it by Allah, and whatever he said and did in carrying out the duties of this office, his position in it was of the representative of Divine Will. In this manner, whatever he said on the basis of his personal judgement, his judgement in those matters was approved by Allah, and was, derived from the light of the knowledge which Allah had blessed him with. That is why whenever his personal judgement was even slightly turned away from Allah's pleasure, it was immediately rectified by manifest Revelation (*wahî-jalî*.) This rectification of some of his personal judgements is itself a proof that all the rest of his religious judgements and interpretations were precisely in accordance with Divine Will.

The third kind of the things were those he said concerning common matters of life as a man, which had nothing to do with the duties of Prophethood, which he said before being appointed a Prophet as well as continued saying even after having been appointed a Prophet. About this kind of the things it should be understood at the outset that there was no dispute with the disbelievers concerning them. They had not accused him of being a misled and misguided person because of these but because of the first two kinds of the things. These things were not disputed and therefore could not become the cause of a verse from Allah. But although they were not the subject of any dispute, yet the fact is that in this private aspect of his life also never did the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) utter a

word that was opposed to the truth, but at all times, under all conditions, his words and deeds remained within the bounds that Allah had prescribed for living his life as a Prophet and righteous man. Therefore, the light of Revelation shone in that sphere as well. This same thing has been reported from the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) in some authentic *Aḥādīth*. In Muṣṣaḥid Aḥmad a Tradition has been related on the authority of Ḥaḍrat Abū Hurayrah, saying that the Holy Prophet once said, "I never say anything but what is true and right." A Companion said, "O Messenger of Allah, you say things sometimes in jest also." The Holy Prophet replied: "Indeed, I never say anything but the truth." According to Muṣṣaḥid Aḥmad and Abū Da'ūd, Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Aamr bin 'Ās is reported to have said, "I used to write down whatever I heard from the sacred tongue of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) so as to preserve it. The people of the Qur'āsh forbade me to do this, saying, 'You are writing down everything whereas the Holy Prophet is a man, he sometimes says things in the state of anger too'. At this I gave up writing. Afterwards when I mentioned this before the Holy Prophet, he said, 'You should continue writing: By Him in Whose hand is my life, never have I said anything but the truth' " (For a complete discussion of this question, see my book *Taḥṣīn* vol. 1, Article Prophethood and its Injunctions)

5 That is, "There is no human being who teaches him this, as you seem to think, but he obtains this knowledge through a supernatural source." According to some people, "mighty in power" implies Allah Himself, but a great majority of the commentators are agreed that it implies the Angel Gabriel (upon whom be peace). This same view has been reported from Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah, Ḥaḍrat Abū Hurayrah, Qatādah, Muḥabed and Rabī' bin Anas Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kaskir, Razi, Āḥṣai and others also have adopted this very view. Shah Waliyullah and Maṣṣūḥ Ashraf 'Alī Thanwī also have followed this same view in their translations. And the fact is that from the other explanations of the Qur'ān itself also this very thing is confirmed. In Sūrah Takwīr it has been said: "This indeed is the Word of a noble Messenger, who has great power and high rank with the Owner of the Throne: there he is obeyed and held as trustworthy. And (O people of Makkah), your Companion is not mad. He has seen that Messenger on the bright horizon." (vv. 19-23). Then, in Sūrah Al-Baqarah. 97, the Angel has been mentioned by name through whom this teaching had been revealed on the heart of the Prophet: "Say to them: Whoever is enemy to Gabriel should understand that he has, by Allah's Command, revealed to your heart the Qur'ān." If these verses are read with this verse of Sūrah An-Najm, there remains no doubt that here "mighty in power" implies the Angel Gabriel and not Allah. More about it to follow.

Here, some people express the doubt as to how the Angel Gabriel can be regarded as the Holy Prophet Muḥammed's teacher. For this would mean that he

was the teacher and the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) his pupil, and this would place him above the Holy Prophet in rank. But this suspicion is misplaced, because Gabriel did not impart instruction to the Holy Prophet from any personal knowledge of his own, which might give him superiority over the Holy Prophet. Allah, in fact, had made him a means of conveying knowledge to the Holy Prophet, and he was the Holy Prophet's teacher in the metaphoric sense for being only a medium of instruction. That does not give him any superiority whatever. To quote an example: After the Prayer was prescribed five times a day, Allah sent Gabriel (peace be upon him) to teach the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) the correct times of the Prayers, and he led him in the Prayers five times daily for two days. This has been related in Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Tirmidhī and Mu'waṭṭā and other collections of the *Aḥādīth*, with authentic chains of reporters, and in this the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) himself has explained that he was the follower and Gabriel his leader in the Prayers. But his being made the leader only for the purpose of instruction does not mean that he was superior to the Holy Prophet in rank.

6. Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah take *dhū-mirra-tin* of the Text in the meaning of beautiful and grand. Mujaḥid, Ḥasan Baṣrī, Ibn Zaid and Sufyān Thaurī say that it means strong and powerful. Sa'īd bin Musayyab has expressed the opinion that it means wise. In a *Ḥadīth* the Holy Prophet has used this word in the sense of healthy and sound. In Arabic usage this word is used in the meaning of sound in judgement, wise and learned also. Allah has chosen this word for Gabriel (peace be upon him) here because he possesses both intellectual and physical powers to the highest degree. We have adopted only one of these meanings in the translation, for his physical powers have been mentioned in the preceding sentence.

7. The horizon means the eastern edge of the sky where the sun rises and the day dawns. The same has been referred to as *ufuq aṣubūn* (bright horizon) in *Sūrah Takwīr*: 23. Both the verses make it explicit that when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) saw Gabriel (peace be upon him) for the first time, he had appeared on the eastern horizon of the sky; and there are several authentic Traditions which show that at that time he was in his real shape in which Allah has created him. We shall quote all such Traditions below.

8. That is, "After appearing on the uppermost edge of the sky, Gabriel started advancing towards the Prophet till he reached and hung suspended above him in mid air. Then he bent down to him and came within just two bow-lengths or even closer." The commentators generally have taken *qāba qausain* in the meaning of "two bow-lengths", but *Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās* and *Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd* have taken *qaus* in the meaning of a *dhira'* (an arm-length, cubit), and have interpreted the words *kāna qāba qausain*, saying that the distance between them was reduced to only two arm-lengths. And since all bows are not

equal in length, the approximate distance has been expressed by "two bow lengths away or even closer."

9 The sentence *fa awhā illā 'abd-i-hī mā awhā* of the Text can have two translations (1) "He revealed to His (Allah's) servant whatever he revealed" and (2) "He (Allah) revealed to His own servant whatever He revealed." According to the first translation, the meaning would be: Gabriel revealed to the servant of Allah whatever he had to reveal; according to the second "Allah revealed through Gabriel to His servant whatever He had to reveal." The commentators have given both these meanings; the first meaning, however, fits in better with the context, and the same has been reported from Hadrat Hasan Basri and Ibn Zaid. Here, the question may be asked, "How can the pronoun of *'abd-i-hī* turn to Allah instead of to the subject of *awhā*, whereas Allah has nowhere been mentioned from the beginning of the Sūrah to this place?" The answer is that wherever it becomes apparent from the context that the antecedent of a pronoun refers to a particular person, the pronoun turns to him automatically whether it has been mentioned before or not. There are several instances of this available in the Qur'ān itself. In Sūrah Al-Qadr 1, Allah says, "We have sent it down in the Night of Glory." There is no mention of the Qur'ān in this sentence, but the context explicitly shows that the antecedent of the pronoun is the Qur'ān. At another place Allah says, "If Allah were to seize the people because of their misdeeds, He would not leave any creature (unpunished) on its back." In this sentence there is no mention of the earth anywhere, but the context clearly shows that "its back" implies "the earth's back". In Sūrah Yā Sin 69, it has been said, "We have not taught him poetry, nor does poetry behove him." Here, there is no mention of the Holy Prophet, neither before this sentence nor after it, yet the context is explicit that the antecedent of the pronouns is the Holy Prophet himself. In Sūrah Ar-Rahmān, 26, it has been said, "Whatever exists on it shall perish." There is no mention of the earth either before or after it, but the style clearly shows that the pronoun of *'alāhā* turns to it. In Sūrah Al-Wāq'ah: 35, it has been said: "We shall have created them especially." There is no noun or pronoun before or after it to which the pronoun of *humna* may be referring. It is apparent from the context that it signifies the women of Paradise. Thus, as *awhā illā 'abd-i-hī* cannot at all mean that Gabriel revealed to his servant, the meaning necessarily would be that "Gabriel revealed to the servant of Allah", or that "Allah revealed to His own servant through Gabriel."

10 That is, "As the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace) observed all this in broad daylight in the waking condition, with open eyes, his heart did not deem it was a delusion, or that it was a jinn or a devil, who had appeared before him, or that it was an imaginary figure, or a vision that he was seeing while awake, but his heart fully confirmed what his eyes saw. He did not

for a moment doubt that it was the Angel Gabriel and the Message he was conveying was indeed God's Revelation to him."

Here, the question arises: How is it that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) did not entertain any doubt at all concerning such a wonderful and extraordinary observation, and he confirmed with full faith that whatever his eyes saw was an actual fact and not an imaginary figure, nor a jinn or devil? When we consider this question deeply we are led to five reasons for it:

First, that the external conditions in which this observation was made, testified to its truth and validity. The Holy Prophet did not observe this in darkness, or in a state of meditation, or in a vision, or in a sleep-like condition, but the day had dawned and he was fully awake, and he was seeing the whole scene in the broad daylight in the open with his own eyes precisely in the way as one sees the other things in the world. If doubt is cast on this, then whatever we see in the day time, e.g. rivers, mountains, men, houses, etc., also would become doubtful and illusory.

Second, that the Holy Prophet's own internal condition also testified to its validity. He was in his full senses. He had no idea whatever in his mind that he should observe, or that he was going to observe, such a thing. His mind was absolutely free from such a thought and any longing for it, and in this state he met with this experience suddenly. There was no room for doubting that the eyes were seeing an actual scene, but that an imaginary thing had appeared before his eyes.

Third, that the being who had appeared before him in that condition was so marvellous and magnificent, so beautiful and bright, that neither had he ever had any concept of such a being before that he could take it for a product of his own imagination, nor could a jinn or a devil have such an appearance that he would have taken him for a being other than an angel. Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd has reported that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said: "I saw Gabriel in the shape that he had six hundred wings." (Musnad Ahmad). In another Tradition Ibn Mas'ūd has further explained that each single wing of Gabriel (on whom be peace) was so extensive that it seemed to be covering the whole horizon (Musnad Ahmad). Allah Himself has described him as *shadīd al-quwā* (one mighty in power) and *dhū-ḥikma* (one endowed with great wisdom).

Fourth, that the teaching that the being was imparting also testified to the validity of the observation. The Holy Prophet had no concept of the knowledge that he received suddenly through him, a knowledge that comprehended the realities and truths of the whole Universe. About it he could not have the doubt that it consisted of his own ideas which were being set and arranged by his own mind. Likewise, there was no ground for thinking either that it was Satan who was imparting that knowledge to him and thus deluding him, for it is not for Satan that

he should teach, nor can he ever teach, the doctrine of *Tauhid* to man as against polytheism and idol worship, that he should warn of the accountability of the Hereafter, that he should create contempt against ignorance and its practices, that he should invite people to moral excellences, and should exhort a person not only to accept that teaching himself but should also rise to eradicate polytheism, injustice, wickedness and sin from the world and replace these evils by the virtues of *Tauhid*, justice, equity and piety.

The fifth and by far the most important reason is that when Allah chooses a certain person for His Prophethood, He cleanses his heart of doubts and suspicions and evil suggestions and fills it with faith and conviction. In this state no hesitation or vacillation is caused in his mind about the validity of whatever his eyes see and his ears hear. He accepts with complete satisfaction of the heart every truth that is revealed to him by his Lord, whether it is in the form of an observation that he is made to witness with the eyes, or in the form of knowledge which he is inspired with, or in the form of a Revelation that is recited to him literally. In all these cases the Prophet is fully aware that he is absolutely safe and secure against Satanic interference of every kind, and whatever he is receiving in any form is precisely and definitely from his Lord. Like all God-given feelings this sense and feeling of the Prophet also is a certainty which does not admit of any misunderstanding. Just as the fish has a God-given sense of being a swimmer, the bird of being a bird, and the man of being a man, and there can be no likelihood of any misunderstanding in this regard, so has the Prophet also a God-given sense of his being a Prophet. He does not even for a moment entertain the doubt that he has perhaps been involved in the misunderstanding of being a Prophet.

11 This is about the Holy Prophet's second meeting with Gabriel (upon whom be peace) in which he appeared before him in his real shape and nature. The place where this meeting took place has been described as *Sidrat-al-muntahā*, along with which it has been said that nearby it is located *Jannat al ma'vā* (Garden of Repose).

Sidrah in Arabic means the lote-tree and *muntahā* the extreme edge or limit. Thus, literally, *sidrat al-muntahā* means "the lote-tree that is situated on the extreme edge or limit". 'Alīkūn Ālūsī in his *Rah al-Ma'āni* has explained it thus "At this the knowledge of every learned man comes to an end, whatever is beyond it is known to none but Allah." Almost the same explanation of it has been given by Ibn Jarīr in his commentary, and by Ibn Kathīr in *An-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Hadīth wal Āthār*. It is difficult for us to know what kind of a lote-tree it is that is situated at the farthest end of this physical world and what is its nature and state. These are the mysteries of the Divine Universe which are incomprehensible for

us In any case, it is some such thing for which there was no more appropriate word than "*sīdrah*" in human language, in the sight of Allah.

"*Jannat al-ma'vā*" literally means "the *Jannat* (Garden) that is to be an abode." Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan Baṣrī says that this is the same *Jannat* which the believers and righteous will be given in the Hereafter, and from this same verse he has argued that that *Jannat* is in the heavens. Qatāḍah says that this is the *Jannat* in which the souls of the martyrs are kept; it does not imply the *Jannat* that is to be given in the Hereafter. Ibn 'Abbās also says the same but adds that the *Jannat* to be granted to the believers in the Hereafter is not in the heavens but here on the earth.

12. That is, "its Splendour and Glory exceeds all description. The Divine Glory and effulgence was such as can neither be conceived by man nor can any human language depict it adequately.

13. That is, "On the one hand, the Holy Messenger of Allah was so firm and steadfast that even in the Presence of the great Divine Splendour and Glory his sight was not dazzled and he went on gazing at it with great composure. On the other, he was in such complete control of himself and so exclusively attentive that he kept his mind and his sight focussed upon the object for which he had been summoned, and he did not let his sight wander to any side like a spectator's to have a glimpse of the wonderful objects present there. This can be understood by the example of a person who gets an opportunity to be present in the court of a mighty and powerful king, where he comes across such glory and splendour that had never even been conceived by him before. Now, if he be a shallow person, he would be struck with amazement, and if he be un-initiated in the court etiquette, he would become heedless of the royal presence and would turn his gaze to every side to look at the embellishments of the court. But a noble, reverent and dutiful person will neither be stupefied and confounded, nor will become lost in witnessing the court, but will present himself with full dignity and will keep his mind concentrated on the object for which he had been summoned in the royal court. This very virtue and quality of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been esteemed in this verse.

14. This verse clearly states that the Holy Prophet had not seen Allah but His wonderful Signs. Even according to the context, this second meeting also took place with the same being with whom the first meeting had taken place. Therefore, one will have to admit that neither the one whom he had first seen on the uppermost horizon was Allah nor the one whom he saw afterwards by the farthest lote-tree was Allah. Had he seen Allah Almighty on either occasion it would have been a great thing and must certainly have been mentioned here explicitly. About the Prophet Moses it has been said in the Qur'an that he had besought to see Allah

a. J the reply given was: *Lan taranu* "You cannot see Me." (Al-A'raf 143). Now, obviously if this honour that was not granted to the Prophet Moses, had been granted to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings), it would by itself have been such an important thing which must have been stated in clear words. But we see that nowhere in the Qur'an has it been said that the Holy Prophet had seen his Sustainer and Lord. But in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl also, where mention has been made of the event of *Mī'rāj* (Ascension), it has been said that "We had transported Our servant... so that We may show him some of Our Signs" (*li nuriya-hū min āyat-i nā*), and here in connection with his visit at *Sidrat al-muntaba* also it has been said: "He saw of the greatest Signs of His Lord" (*laqad ra'ā min āyat-i Rabb-i-hī kubrā*).

In view of these reasons apparently there was no ground for the dispute whether the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) on both these occasions had seen Allah Almighty or the Angel Gabriel (on whom be peace). But, the reason that has given rise to this dispute is that the traditions of *Ḥadīth* differ on this question. Below we reproduce in their sequence the *Aḥādīth* that have been reported from the different Companions in this regard:

(1) Traditions of Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah:

Ḥadrat Masrūq has stated in *Kitāb at-Tafsīr* of Bukhārī asked Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah O mother of the faithful! Had Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) seen his Lord and Sustainer? She replied: Your question has terrified me. Why do you forget that if a person lays claim to three of the things, he would lay a false claim? (The first of these things that Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah mentioned was) Whoever among you says that Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) had seen his Lord and Sustainer, tells a lie. Then Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah recited these verses. *Lā tudriku-hul-abṣār* "Eyes cannot comprehend Him;" and: *Mā kāna li-baṣhar-in anyyukallimū-hullāh-u illā waḥy-an au min-warr-i-ḥijāb- in au yurūlu rasūl an fayū-his bi-idhni hī mā yashā-u*: "It is not given to any mortal that Allah should speak to him, face to face; He speaks either through Revelation (secret instruction), or from behind a curtain, or He sends a messenger (an angel), who by Allah's Command, reveals whatever He wills." (Ash Shūrā. 51). Then she said "The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) in fact had seen Gabriel (on whom be peace) in his real shape twice."

A part of this *Ḥadīth* is also found in Bukhārī (chapter 4 of *Kitāb at-Tauhīd*). And in the tradition that Bukhārī has cited from Masrūq in *Kitāb Bida' al-Fihālq*, he states. "Hearing this thing from Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah, I asked: What would then Allah's words, *Thumma darrā fa-tadallā, fa-Kāna qāba qawam-i au adnā*, mean? She replied: This refers to Gabriel; he always appeared before the Holy

Prophet in human shape, but on this occasion he had appeared before him in his real shape and nature and the whole horizon was filled with him."

In Muslim (*Kitāb al-Imān*, *Babu fī Dhikr Sidrat al-muntahā*), this conversation between Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah and Masrūq has been related in greater detail its most important part being this: "Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah said 'The one who claims that M. Jinnad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) had seen his Lord and Sustainer imputes a lie to Allah. Masrūq says I was leaning back. Hearing this I sat up and said: Mother of the faithful, do not make haste. Has not Allah said *wa laqad ra'ā-hu bil-ufuq-il nubūḍ* and *laqad ra'ā-hu nazlat an ukhrā*?' Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah replied 'I was the first one in this *Ummah* who inquired of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) about this. He had replied 'It was Gabriel (on whom be peace) I have never seen him in his real shape and form in which Allah has created him except on these two occasions. On these two occasions I saw him descending from the heavens and his great presence was covering the whole space between the earth and the heavens.'"

Ibn Mardūyah has related this tradition of Masrūq, thus: "Ḥadrat 'Ā'ishah said 'I was indeed the first person who asked the Holy Prophet 'Did you ever see your Lord and Sustainer?' He replied, 'No, I had only seen Gabriel descending from the heavens.'"

(2) Traditions of Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd.

Bukhārī (*Kitāb al-Tafsīr*), Muslim (*Kitāb al-Imān*) and Tirmidhī (*Abwāb al-Tafsīr*) contain a tradition on the authority of Zirr bin Ḥubaish, saying that Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd gave this commentary of *fa-kāna qāba qausain-l au adnā*: "The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) saw Gabriel (on whom be peace) in the shape that he had six hundred wings."

In the other traditions of Muslim, Zirr bin Ḥubaish has reported this very commentary of *Ma kadhab al-fu'ādā mā ra'ā* and *laqad ra'ā min āyāt-l Rabbi-hi/ kubrā* from Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd.

In Musnad Ahmad this commentary of Ibn Mas'ūd has been reported by Abdur Raḥmān bin Yazid and Abū Wā'il also besides Zirr bin Ḥubaish. Furthermore, in Musnad Ahmad two more traditions of Zirr bin Ḥubaish have been related in which Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd commenting upon *wa laqad ra'ā hu nazlat an ukhrā*, *'inda-shirat-il muntahā* stated: "The Holy Messenger of Allah said that he saw Gabriel by the lote-tree he had six hundred wings." Imām Ahmad has cited a tradition on the same subject, on the authority of Shaqīq bin Salamah also, in which he states that he heard Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd saying that the Holy Prophet himself had said that he had seen Gabriel (on whom be peace) in that shape at *sidrat al-muntahā*.

- (3) When 'Aṭā' bin Abī Rabāḥ asked Ḥaḍrat Abū Hurairah the meaning of the verse *laqad ra'ā-hu naẓlat-an ukhrā*, he replied: "The Holy Prophet had seen Gabriel (on whom be peace)." (Muslim: *Kitāb al Imān*)
- (4) Imām Muslim has related in *Kitāb al-Imān* two traditions of 'Abdullah bin Shaqīq on the authority of Ḥaḍrat Abū Dharr Ghifārī, in one of which he says that he asked the Holy Prophet: "Did you ever see your Lord?" The Holy Prophet replied, *Nūr-un amā arā-hu*, and in the other he says that the Holy Prophet gave this answer to his question *Ra'aitu nūr-an*. Of the first answer of the Holy Prophet Ibn al-Qayyan has given this meaning in his *Zād al-Ma'ād*: "Between me and the sight of my Lord there was Light," and of the second this: "I did not see my Lord but only a Light."
- Nasā'ī and Ibn Abī Hātim have reported the saying of Ḥaḍrat Abū Dharr, thus: "The Holy Prophet had seen his Lord with the heart (mind), not with the eyes"
- (5) Imām Muslim in his *Kitāb al-Imān* has related this tradition from Ḥaḍrat Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī: "The Holy Prophet said: The sight of no one from among His creatures has reached Allah Almighty"
- (6) Traditions of Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās.

According to Muslim, when Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās was asked the meaning of: *Mā kadhab al-fu'ādu mī ar'ā, wa laqad ra'ā hu naẓlat-an ukhrā*, he said: "The Holy Messenger of Allah saw his Lord twice with his heart." This tradition is also contained in Muḥaddith Ahmad.

Ibn Mardūyah has cited the saying of Ibn 'Abbās, on the authority of 'Aṭā' bin Abī Rabāḥ. The Holy Messenger of Allah had not seen Allah with the eyes but with the heart."

Nasā'ī contains a tradition from 'Ikrimah saying that Ibn 'Abbās said "Do you wonder at this that Allah made the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), His friend, blessed Moses with His Word and honoured Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) with His sight?" Hākim also has cited this tradition and held it as authentic.

In Tirmudhī, there is a tradition from Sha'bī to the effect that Ibn 'Abbās said in a gathering. "Allah had distributed His Sight and His Word between Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and Moses (upon whom be peace) He spoke to Moses twice, and Muḥammad saw Him twice." Hearing these very words of Ibn 'Abbās, Masrūq had approached Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah with the question "Had Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) seen his Lord?" She had replied "What you have said has made my hair stand on end." After this the same

dialogue that we have cited above under the tradition of Hadrat 'Ā'ishah took place between Hadrat 'Ā'ishah and Masrūq.

In one of the traditions reported in Tirmidhī from Ibn 'Abbās, he says "The Holy Prophet had seen Allah Almighty." In yet another he says "He had seen Him twice", and in a third one; "He had seen Him with the heart."

In Musnad Ahmad a tradition from Ibn 'Abbās is to the effect. "The Holy Prophet said. I saw my Lord, the blessed, the exalted." In another tradition he says "The Holy Messenger of Allah said Tonight my Lord came to me in the best shape." I think that by this the Holy Prophet meant that he saw Allah Almighty in a vision.

Ṭabarānī and Ibn Mardīyah have related this tradition also from Ibn 'Abbās: "The Holy Messenger of Allah had seen his Lord twice, once with the eyes and the second time with the heart."

- (7) Muḥammad bin Ka'b al-Qurṣī states that when some of the Companions asked the Holy Prophet, "Did you ever see your Lord?" he replied. I have seen Him twice with my heart." (Ibn Abī Hātim) Ibn Jarīr has related this very tradition, thus: "He said: I have not seen Him with the eye, but with the heart twice."
- (8) A tradition of Hadrat Anas bin Mālīk which Imām Bukhārī has cited in his *Kitāb al-Taḥqīd* in connection with the event of the *Mī'rāj*, on the authority of Sharīk bin 'Abdullah, contains words to the effect "When the Holy Prophet reached *sidrat al-muntahā*, Allah Almighty drew near him and hung suspended above him till there remained between the Holy Prophet and Him a distance equal to two bow-lengths or even less. Then, what Allah revealed to him included the Command for 50 Prayers." But, besides the objections that Imām Khattābī, Hāfiz Ibn Hajar, Ibn Hazm and Hāfiz 'Abdul Haq (author of *Al-Jam' baina al-Sahīhain*), have raised in respect of the authenticity and subject-matter of this tradition, the main objection against it is that it clearly contradicts the Qur'an, for the Qur'an mentions two separate occasions when the experience of the vision took place, the first initially at the uppermost horizon to which reference has been made in: *Danā fa-tadallā, fa-kāna qāba qausayn-i au adnā*, and a second time near *sidrat al-muntahā*. But this tradition mixes up the two occasions and presents them both as one occasion of the vision. Therefore, because of its being contradictory to the Qur'an, it cannot be acceptable in any case.

As for the other traditions that we have cited above, the weightiest among them are those that have been related from Hadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd and Hadrat 'Ā'ishah, for both of them have unanimously reported this saying of the

Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) himself that on neither occasion he had seen Allah but Gabriel (peace be on him), and these traditions fully conform to the explanations and allusions of the Qur'an. Furthermore, they are also confirmed by the sayings of the Holy Prophet which Hadrat Abu Dharr and Hadrat Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī have reported from him. On the contrary the traditions that have been cited from Hadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās in the books of *Hadīth* are self-contradictory. In some he regards both the experiences as a vision with the eyes, in some both as a vision with the heart, in some one with the eyes and the other with the heart, and in some he wholly negates the vision with the eyes. In none of these traditions he has cited any saying of the Holy Prophet himself and where he has cited such a saying, it contains no mention of either of the two experiences stated in the Qur'an, besides, the explanation of one of his traditions given by the other indicates that the Holy Prophet at some time had seen Allah Almighty not in the waking condition but in a vision during sleep. Therefore, in fact, for the commentary of these verses the traditions ascribed to Hadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās cannot be held as reliable. Likewise, although the traditions of Muḥammad bin Ka'b al-Qurẓī cite a saying of the Holy Prophet, they do not mention the names of the Companions who might have heard this thing from the Holy Prophet himself. Moreover, in one of them it has been said that the Holy Prophet had clearly denied having seen Allah with the eyes.

15 That is, "You regard the teachings being given to you by Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) as erroneous and falsehood, whereas he is being given this knowledge by Allah, and Allah has made him see with his own eyes the verities to which he is testifying before you. Now consider it for yourself as to how irrational are the beliefs that you are following persistently and as to whom you are causing loss by opposing and resisting the person who is guiding you to the Right Way. In this connection, especially the three goddesses that were worshipped generally by the people of Makkah, Ṭā'if and other parts of Ḥijāz have been taken as an example. About them, they have been asked. Have you ever considered rationally whether they could have even the slightest role in the affairs of the Godhead of the earth and heavens? Or could they bear any relationship whatever with the Lord of the Universe?

The shrine of Lāt was in Ṭā'if and the Bani Thaqif were so devoted to it that when Abrahā was advancing to Makkah with his army of elephants to destroy the Ka'bah, the people only in order to save the temple of their deity had provided the wicked man with guides to lead him to Makkah so that he should spare Lāt, whereas like all the Arabs the people of Thaqif also believed that the Ka'bah is Allah's House. Scholars have disputed the meaning of Lāt. According to Ibn Jarīr Tabarī it is the feminine gender of Allah, i.e. originally this word was *allahatun* which became al-Lāt. According to Zamakhsharī, it is derived from *lavā yalvi*

which means to turn to or bow to somebody. As the polytheists turned to it for worship and bowed to it and circumambulated it, it began to be called Lāt. Ibn Abbās reads it as *lāt* (with a stress on t) and holds it is derived from *lāt yalītu*, which means to churn and mix together. He and Mujahid state that thus, in fact, was a man, who lived on a rock near Ṭā'if, and used to entertain the pilgrims to Makkah with barley drinks and food. When he died the people built a shrine to him on the same rock and began to worship him. But this explanation of Lāt, in spite of having been reported on the authority of scholars like Ibn 'Abbās and Mujahid, is not acceptable for two reasons. First, that in the Qur'an it has been called Lat and not Lau, second, that the Qur'an describes all the three as goddesses and according to this tradition Lāt was a man, not a woman.

'Uzzā is derived from *'izzat*, and it means the one (female) enjoying veneration and respect. This was the special goddess of the Quraish and her shrine was situated at Ḥurād in the valley of Nakhlah, between Makkah and Ṭā'if (For the location of Nakhlah, see E N 33 of Sūrah Al-Aḥqāf). The people of Banī Shaḥān, who were the allies of the Banī Hashim, were its attendants. The Quraish and the people of other tribes paid visits to it and presented offerings and made sacrifices to it. As for the Ka'bah sacrificial animals were driven to it also and it was held in the highest esteem. Ibn Hishām relates that when Abū Uḥaiyah was on the point of death, Abū Lahab paid him a visit and found him weeping. Abū Lahab asked, "Why do you weep, Abū Uḥaiyah? Are you afraid of death?—and death is the destiny of everybody." He said, "By God, I do not weep because of the fear of death, but I am grieved to think as to how 'Uzzā will be worshipped after me." Abū Lahab said, "It was neither worshipped for your sake in your lifetime, nor will it be given up after you have left the world." Abū Uḥaiyah said, "Now I am satisfied that there are people who will take my place after me."

The shrine of Manāt was situated at Qudaid by the Red Sea between Makkah and Madīnah, and the people of Khuzā'ah and Aus and Khazraj were in particular its great devotees. People visited it as pilgrims, circumambulated it and made offerings and sacrifices before it. In the Ḥajj months as soon as the pilgrims became free from their visit to the Ka'bah and the religious services at Minā and aḥāf, they would start raising cries of "*Labbaik, labbaik*" even there for the purpose of visiting Manāt, and the people who intended to go on this second "hajj" did not run between the Safā and the Marwah.

16 That is, "You held these goddesses as daughters of Allah, Lord of the worlds, and did not consider while inventing this absurd creed that as for yourselves you regarded the birth of a daughter as disgraceful, and desired to have only male children, but as for Allah you assign to Him only daughters."

17 That is, "Those whom you call gods and goddesses are neither gods nor goddesses, nor do they possess any attribute of divinity, nor any share whatever in the powers of Godhead. You have of your own whim made them children of God and deities and associates in Godhead. Allah has sent down no authority which you may produce as a proof in support of your presumptions."

18 In other words, the basic causes of their deviation are two. First, that they do not feel any need for the knowledge of reality for the purpose of adopting a creed and religion, but make a supposition on the basis of a mere conjecture and then put belief in it as though it were the reality. Second, that they have, in fact, adopted this attitude in order to follow the lusts of their souls. They desire that they should have such a deity as should help them attain their aims and objects in the world, and if at all there is to be a Hereafter, it should take the responsibility to have them granted forgiveness there too. But it should not impose any restriction of the lawful and the unlawful on them nor should bind them in any discipline of morality. That is why they do not feel inclined to worship One God as taught by the Prophets, and only like to worship these invented gods and goddesses.

19. That is, in every age the Prophets appointed by Allah have been guiding these wicked people to the Truth, and now Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) has come to tell them as to whom belongs Godhead in reality in the Universe.

20 Another meaning of this verse can be: "Is man entitled to take anyone he pleases as his god?" Still another meaning can be, "Can the desire of man to have his prayers answered by these gods ever be fulfilled?"

21 That is, "Even if all the angels together intercede for a person, it cannot be beneficial for him not to speak of the intercession by these invented deities of yours, which can do no one any good. All the powers of Godhead rest with Allah. Even the angels cannot dare intercede for somebody before Him unless He permits it and is pleased to hear their intercession in his behalf."

22 That is, "Their first folly is that they have taken these powerless angels who cannot even intercede for anyone before Allah as their deities. Their second folly is that they regard them as female and daughters of Allah. The basic reason for these errors is that they do not believe in the Hereafter. For had they been believers in the Hereafter, they would never have behaved so irrationally and irresponsibly. Their denial of the Hereafter has made them heedless of their end, and they think that believing or disbelieving in God, or believing in a thousand gods does not make any difference, for none of these creeds seems to entail any good or bad result in the present life of the world. Whether the people are deniers

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وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسَاءُوْا بِمَا عَمِلُوْا وَ
يَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا بِالْحَسَنٰتِ الَّتِيْ فِيْهَا كَثِيْرٌ مِّنَ الْاَشْيِءِ وَالْفَوَاحِشِ
اِلَّا اللّٰمَۃَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاَسْعٰ الْمَغْفِرَةُ ۚ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ اِذَا اَنْشَأَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ وَ
اِذَا اَنْتُمْ اَحْيَۃٌ فِيْ بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهَاتِكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تُزَكُّوْا اَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنۢ اَتَىٰ ۙ
اَقْرَبٰتِ الَّذِي تُوَلّٰى ۚ وَاعْطٰى ۙ قَلِيْلًا ۙ وَ اَكْثٰى ۙ ۙ اَعْتَدَ ۙ عَلٰى الْغَيْبِ ۙ وَهُوَ
بِشَيْءٍ ۙ اَمَرَ لَّوْ يَنْبَأُ بِمَا فِيْ صُحُفِ مُّوْسٰى ۙ وَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الَّذِي وُلِّيَ ۙ اِلَّا سِتْرٌ
وَ اِيْدَةٌ ۙ يَدْرَأُ الْاُخْرٰى ۙ وَ اَنْ لِّمَنۢ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اِلَّا مَا سَعٰى ۙ وَ اَنْ سَعِيْهِ سَوْفَ
يُرٰى ۙ ثُمَّ يُجْزٰىهُ الْجِزَاۗءَ الْاَوَّلٰى ۙ وَ اَنْ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ النُّتْقٰى ۙ وَ اِنَّهُ هُوَ اَضْحٰكُ
وَ اَبْكٰى ۙ وَ اِنَّهُ هُوَ اَمَاتٌ وَ اَحْيَاۗءٌ وَ اِنَّهُ خَلَقَ الرُّوْحٰنِ الذَّكَرَ وَ الْاُنْثٰى ۙ
مِّنۢ نُّطْفَةٍ ۙ اِذَا تُمِنٰى ۙ وَ اَنْ عَلَيْهِ النُّشٰۃُ الْاُخْرٰى ۙ وَ اِنَّهُ هُوَ اَعْلٰى وَ
اَقْنٰى ۙ وَ اِنَّهُ هُوَ رَبُّ الشُّعْرٰى ۙ وَ اِنَّهُ اَهْلَكَ مَا دَاۗءَ الْاَوَّلٰى ۙ وَ سَمُوْدًا ۙ فَمَا
اَبْقٰى ۙ وَ قَوْمَ ثُوّجٍ مِّنۢ قَبْلُ ۙ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا مُّظْلَمًا ۙ وَ اَطْعٰى ۙ وَ الْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ ۙ
اَهْوٰى ۙ فَفَعَّلَهَا مٰا عَشٰى ۙ فَيَاۤىُّ اِلٰهٍ رَبِّكَ تَمٰرٰى ۙ هٰذَا نَذِيْرٌ مِّنَ
النُّذُرِ الْاَوَّلٰى ۙ اَرَقَيْتِ الْاَرْقٰۃَ ۙ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ كَاشِفَةٌ ۙ اَفَمَنْ
هٰذَا الْحَدِيْثُ تَعَجَّبُوْنَ ۙ وَ تَضْحَكُوْنَ وَ لَا تَتَّبِعُوْنَ ۙ وَ اَنْتُمْ
سٰىدُوْنَ ۙ فَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَ اعْبُدُوْا ۙ

So, O Prophet, leave him alone who turns away from Our remembrance²⁴ and seeks nothing but the life of the world,²⁵ this²⁶ only is their amount of knowledge;²⁷ only your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Way and who is on the right path, and to Allah belongs everything in the heavens and the earth²⁸—so that²⁹ Allah may recompense the evil doers according to their deeds and give good rewards to those who have adopted the righteous attitude, who avoid grave sins³⁰ and open indecencies³¹ save the minor offences³² Surely your Lord is liberal in forgiveness.³³ He knows you well from the time He produced you from the earth and when you were yet embryos in your mothers' wombs. Therefore, do not claim piety for yourselves; He alone knows best who is really pious and Godfearing.

Then, O Prophet, have you seen him who turned away from God's Way, who gave a little and stopped?³⁴ Does he possess the knowledge of the unseen that he sees the reality?³⁵ Has he not heard of those things that have been mentioned in the Books of Moses and in the Books of that Abraham who proved true to his pledge?³⁶

"That no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another;³⁷ and that there is nothing for man but what he has striven for;³⁸ and that his striving shall soon be seen,³⁹ and then he will be fully rewarded for it; and that to your Lord is the final goal; and that it is He Who made (men) to laugh and to weep⁴⁰; and that it is He Who gave death and granted life; and that it is He Who created the pair of male and female from a sperm-drop when it is emitted;⁴¹ and that it rests upon Him to grant the second life;⁴² and that it is He Who made rich and bestowed property⁴³ and that He is the Lord of Sirius;⁴⁴ and that it is He Who destroyed the former 'Ād,⁴⁵ and annihilated Thamūd so as to spare none of them; and before them He destroyed the people of Noah because they were a most wicked and rebellious people. And He overthrew the subverted settlements, then there covered them that which (you know well) covered them.⁴⁶ Then,⁴⁷ O man, which of your Lord's bounties will you doubt?"⁴⁸

This is a warning of the warnings already given.⁴⁹ That which is coming is near at hand,⁵⁰ None but Allah can avert it.⁵¹ Is it at these things that you marvel?⁵² And you laugh and weep not?⁵³ And you ward them off by merry-making?⁵⁴ Bow down before Allah and

worship Him.⁵⁵

(Contd. from p 221)

of God or believers in many gods, or in One God, their crops ripen as well as fail, they fall ill as well as recover from illness, and they pass through all kinds of circumstances, good as well as bad. Therefore it is not at all an important and serious matter for them that man should or should not take some one as a deity, or should take as many deities or of any kind as he likes of his choice. When according to them the decision as to what is truth and what is falsehood is to take place in this very world, depending on the results thereof appearing here, obviously the results here do not decide absolutely that one creed is true and another false. Therefore, the adoption of one creed and rejection of another is a matter of mere whim with these people."

23. That is, "They have not adopted this creed about the angels on the ground that they had found through some means of knowledge that they were females and daughters of God, but they have presumed this on mere conjecture and have set up these shrines at which they pray for fulfillment of desires, make offerings and pay tributes."

24. *Dhikr* here may imply the Qur'ān as well as mere admonition. It may also mean that he does not like that even God be mentioned before him.

25. That is, "You should not waste your time in making him understand the truth, for such a person will never be inclined to accept any invitation which is based on God-worship, which calls to objects and values higher than the material benefits of the world, and according to which the real aim of life may be the eternal success and well-being of the Hereafter. Instead of expending your time and energy on such a materialistic and ungodly person, you should devote attention to the people who are inclined to heed the remembrance of Allah and are not involved in the worship of the world."

26. This is a parenthetical sentence which has been inserted here as an explanation of the preceding verse.

27. That is, "These people neither know nor can think anything beyond the world and its immediate gains; therefore, it is futile merely to expend time and energy on them."

28. In other words, neither the question whether a person is gone astray or is on right guidance, is to be decided in this world, nor has its decision been left to the judgement of the people of the world; the decision rests with Allah. He alone is the Master of the earth and heavens and He alone knows which way out of the different ways being followed by the people of the world, is the way of

guidance and which of error and deviation. Therefore, you should least bother if the polytheistic Arabs and the Makkian disbelievers think you are deluded and misguided and regard their own ignorance as truth and guidance. Leave them alone if they wish to remain lost in their falsehood. You need not waste your time in disputing with them.

29 The theme is resumed here and connected as a continuous whole with verse 29. Without the parenthesis, it would read: "Leave him alone so that Allah may requite the evildoers for their evil deeds."

30 For explanation, see E.N. 53 of An-Nisā.

31 For explanation, see E.N. 130 of Al-An'ām and E.N. 89 of An-Nahl.

32. The word *lamam* as found in the original is used for a small quantity of something, or its slight effect, or its mere closeness, or its existence for a short time. This word is used to express the sense that a person did not commit an act but was very near to committing it.

On the basis of its usages some commentators have taken the word *lamam* in the meaning of minor sins. Some others have taken it in the meaning that a person should practically reach very near a grave sin but should desist from actually committing it. Still others take it in the sense of a person's remaining involved in a sin temporarily and then desisting from it. And according to some it implies that a person should think of, or wish, or intend to commit a sin but should take no practical steps towards it. In this regard, the views of the Companions and their immediate followers are as follows:

Zaid bin Aslam and Ibn Zaid opine, and a saying of Hadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās also is to the same effect, that it signifies those sins which the people had committed in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, then after embracing Islam they refrained from them.

Another view of Ibn 'Abbas is, and the same is also the view of Hadrat Abū Hurairah, Hadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin 'Ās, Mujāhid, Hasan Baṣrī and Abū Sālih, that it implies a person's being involved in a grave sin or indecency temporarily, or occasionally, and then giving it up.

Hadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, Masruq and Sha'bī say, and the same also has been reported from Hadrat Abū Hurairah and Hadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas in authentic traditions, that this implies a person's approaching the very point of a grave sin and crossing all its preliminaries but then restraining himself at the final stage, e.g. a person goes out with the intention of stealing but refrains from it in the end, or has close association with other women, but refrains from committing adultery.

Ḥaḡrat 'Abdullah bin Zubair, 'Ikrimah, Qatādah and Ḍaḥḥāk say that this signifies those minor sins for which no punishment has been prescribed in the world nor any threat of punishment held out in the Hereafter

Sa'īd bin al-Musayyab says that this implies one's thinking of a sin in the mind but restraining oneself from committing it practically

These are the different explanations which have been reported in the traditions from the Companions and their immediate followers. The majority of the later commentators and doctors of law and jurists are of the opinion that this verse and verse 31 of Surah An-Nisā classify sins into two main kinds: the major sins and the minor sins, and these two verses give man the hope that if he abstains from the major sins and open indecencies, Allah will overlook his minor errors. Although some distinguished scholars have also opined that no sin is minor and the disobedience of Allah is by itself a major sin, yet as stated by Imām Ghazālī the distinction between the major and the minor sins is something which cannot be denied, for the sources of knowledge of the *Shari'ah* values and injunctions all point to this.

As for the question, what is the distinction between the major and the minor sins, and what kinds of sins are major and what kinds of them minor? we are satisfied that "Every such act is a major sin which has been forbidden by a clear ordinance of the Divine Book and the *Shari'ah* of the Prophet, or for which Allah and His Messenger have prescribed a punishment in the world, or have held out a threat of punishment in the Hereafter, or have cursed the one guilty of committing it, or given the news of infliction of punishment on those guilty of committing it." Apart from this class of sins all other acts which are disapproved by the *Shari'ah*, come under the definition of minor sins. Likewise, the mere desire for a major sin, or an intention to commit it, also is not a major sin but a minor sin—so much so that even crossing all the preliminaries of a major sin does not constitute a major sin unless one has actually committed it. However, even a minor sin becomes a major sin in case it is committed with a feeling of contempt for religion and of arrogance against Allah, and the one guilty of it does not consider the *Shari'ah* that has declared it an evil worthy of any attention and reverence.

33 That is, "The forgiveness for the one guilty of minor sins is not for the reason that a minor sin is no sin, but for the reason that Allah Almighty does not treat His servants narrow-mindedly and does not seize them on trifling faults, if the servants adopt piety and abstain from major sins and indecencies, He will not seize them for their minor errors and will forgive them magnanimously on account of His infinite mercy."

34 The reference is to Walid bin Mughirah who was one of the prominent chiefs of the Quraish. According to Ibn Jarir Tabari, this person had first become inclined to accept the invitation of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace), but when a polytheist friend of his came to know of his intention to become a Muslim, he counselled him not to give up his ancestral faith, and asked him that if he was afraid of the punishment of the Hereafter, he should pay him a certain amount of money and he would take the responsibility to suffer the punishment on his behalf. Walid accepted the offer and turned away from Allah's way. Then he paid only a little of the amount that he had promised to pay his polytheist friend and withheld the rest. The allusion to this incident was meant to tell the disbelievers of Makkah what kind of errors and follies they were involved in because of their heedlessness of the Hereafter and their ignorance of the Divine Religion."

35. That is, "Does he know that this conduct is in any way beneficial for him? Does he know that a person can save himself even in this way from the punishment of the Hereafter?"

36 In the following verses a resume is being given of the teachings sent down in the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses. The Books of Moses signify the Torah. As for the Books of the Prophet Abraham they have become extinct and no mention of them is found even in the holy scriptures of the Jews and Christians. Only in the Qur'an at two places have some parts of the teachings contained in the Books of the Prophet Abraham been cited, here and in the concluding verses of Sûrah Al-A'la

37. From this verse three cardinal principles are derived (1) That every person is himself responsible for what he does; (2) that the responsibility of one man's act cannot be transferred to another unless he has a share in the commission of the act and (3) that even if a person wishes he cannot take on himself the responsibility of another man's act, nor can the actual culprit be let off on the ground that another person is willing to suffer the punishment on his behalf.

38 From this verse also three important principles are derived (1) That every person will get only the fruit of his own deeds, (2) that the fruit of one man's deeds cannot be given to another unless he has a share in that deed, and (3) that none can attain anything without striving for it.

Some people wrongly apply these three principles to the economic problems of the world and conclude that no person can become the lawful owner of anything except of his own earned income. But this conclusion clashes with several laws and injunctions given by the Qur'an itself, e.g. the law of inheritance, according to which many individuals inherit a person and are regarded as his lawful heirs, whereas the heritage is not their earned income. As for a

sacking for instance, it cannot be proved by any stretch of imagination that its labour had any share in the wealth left by its father. Likewise, there are the injunctions about the *zakaat* and voluntary charities according to which the wealth of one man is transferred to others only on the basis of their legal and moral entitlement and they become its lawful owners, whereas in the production of this wealth they did not make any contribution at all. Thus, it is against the intention of the Qur'ān to take a verse of it and derive from it such conclusions as clash with the other teachings of the Qur'ān itself.

Some other people regard these principles as concerning the Hereafter and raise the question whether, according to these principles, the deeds of one man can in some way be also beneficial for the other person, and whether the deeds of a person which he does for another person, or on his behalf, can be accepted from him, and whether it is also possible that a person may transfer the reward of his act to another. If the answer to these questions be in the negative the sending of spiritual rewards (*isāl thawāb*) for the dead and performing Hajj on behalf of another, would be inadmissible, even the prayer of forgiveness for the other person would be meaningless, for this prayer also is not the concerned person's own act and deed. However, this extreme point of view has been adopted by none among the followers of Islam except the Mu'tazilites. Only they take this verse in the meaning that one man's acts and deeds can in no case be beneficial for the other. On the contrary, the followers of the *Sunnah* are unanimous that the prayer of one man is beneficial for the other because it is confirmed by the Qur'ān; however, they differ only in details, and not in principles, as to whether the sending of spiritual rewards for another and doing a good work on behalf of another is beneficial or not.

- (1) The term *isāl thawāb* means that after a person has performed a good act, he may pray to Allah to grant its rewards to another. In this regard, Imām Mālik and Imām Shāfi'ī have expressed the opinion that the rewards of the pure bodily acts of worship, e.g. the Prayer, the Fasting and recitals of the Qur'ān, etc. cannot reach the other person; however, the rewards of one's monetary acts of worship, e.g. charities, or Hajj, which is a combination of the monetary and bodily worships, can reach the other, for the principle is that one man's act should not be beneficial for the other. But since according to authentic *Aḥādith* the rewards of charities can be conveyed and Hajj on behalf of another also can be performed, they admit the permissibility of conveying of rewards to the extent of this kind of the acts of worship only. On the contrary, the Hanafī viewpoint is that a man can send the reward of each of his virtuous acts as a gift to the other, whether it is the Prayer, or the Fast, or the recitation of the Qur'ān, or remembrance of Allah, or charity, or Hajj and 'Umrah. The argument is that just as a man after carrying out a piece of work can tell the master to

pay the wages to such and such other person instead of him, so after performing a good deed also he can pray to Allah to grant its rewards to such and such other person instead of him. In this there is no rational ground for making exception of some kinds of virtues and keeping it restricted to some other kinds of virtues. The same is confirmed by a large number of the traditions:

A Tradition, on the unanimous authority of Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah, Ḥaḍrat Abū Hurairah, Ḥaḍrat Jābir bin 'Abdullah, Ḥaḍrat Abū Rāfi', Ḥaḍrat Abū Talḥah Anṣarī and Ḥudhaifah bin Usaid al-Ghafari has been reported in Bukhārī, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Mājah, Ṭabari (in *Awṣaf*), Mustadrik and Ibn Abī Shaibah, saying that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) got two rams and sacrificed one on behalf of himself and his family and the other on behalf of his Ummah.

Muslim, Bukhārī, Musnad Ahmad, Abū Da'ūd and Nasā'ī have related a Tradition from Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah to the effect that a person said to the Holy Prophet "My mother has died suddenly. I think if she had a chance to speak, she would have asked me giving away something in charity. Now, if I give away something in charity on her behalf, will she get a reward for it?" The Holy Prophet replied, "Yes, she will."

In Musnad Ahmad there is a Tradition from Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin 'Āṣ to the effect that his grandfather, 'Āṣ bin Wā'il, had vowed in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance to sacrifice 100 camels. His uncle, Hishām bin 'Āṣ, sacrificed fifty camels of his own share. Ḥaḍrat 'Amr bin 'Āṣ, asked the Holy Prophet as to what he should do. The Holy Prophet replied: "If your father had affirmed faith in the Oneness of God, you may observe fasts on his behalf, or give something in charity; this would be beneficial for him."

A Tradition has been reported in Musnad Ahmad, Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah, on the authority of Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan Baṣrī, to the effect that Ḥaḍrat Sa'd bin 'Ubādah asked the Holy Prophet: "My mother has died. Should I give something in charity on her behalf?" The Holy Prophet replied in the affirmative. Several other traditions bearing on the same subject also have been related in Bukhārī, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Nasā'ī, Tirmidhī, Abū Da'ūd, Ibn Mājah, etc. on the authority of Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah, Ḥaḍrat Abū Hurairah and Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās, according to which the Holy Prophet permitted giving away of something in charity on behalf of the deceased person describing it as beneficial for him.

According to Dāraqutnī a person said to the Holy Prophet "I have been serving my parents while they were alive; what should I do now when they are dead?" The Holy Prophet replied, "This would also be their service if you offered the Prayer on their behalf along with your own Prayers, and observed the Fast on their behalf along with your own Fast." Another tradition in Dāraqutnī has been

related from Ibadrat 'Ali according to which the Holy Prophet said "If a person passing by the graveyard recites *"Qul huwallahu abad"* eleven times and gives away its reward for the dead, all the dead ones will be granted their due shares of its rewards."

This large number of the traditions which support one another explicitly state that the transfer of the spiritual rewards is not only possible but rewards of all kinds of acts of worship and virtuous deeds can be sent and conveyed and in it there is no specification of any particular kind of acts and deeds. In this connection, however, four things should be understood well.

First, that the reward of that act only can be transferred, which may have been performed purely for the sake of Allah and according to the *Shari'ah* injunctions; otherwise obviously an act which is performed for the sake of another than Allah, or in contravention of the *Shari'ah* injunctions, cannot even entitle its doer himself to any reward, nothing to say of its transfer to another person.

Secondly, the gift of the rewards will certainly reach those righteous persons who are staying as guests with Allah, but no rewards are expected to reach those culprits who are placed in confinement there. The gift can reach the guests of Allah but the criminals of Allah cannot be expected to receive it. If a person sends his rewards to him because of a misunderstanding, it will not go waste but instead of reaching the culprit it will return to the actual worker himself just like the money-order which returns to the sender in case it does not reach the one to whom it has been sent.

Thirdly, the transfer of the reward is possible but not the transfer of punishment. That is, it is possible that one may do a good deed and may willingly transfer its reward to the other and it reaches him, but it is not possible that one may commit a sin and transfer its punishment to the other and it reaches him.

The fourth thing is that a virtuous act is beneficial in two ways. First, on account of its those results which accrue to the soul and morality of the doer himself because of which he becomes worthy of a reward in the sight of Allah; second, on account of the reward which Allah grants him as a gift and favour. The transfer of the spiritual reward does not concern the first but only the second. This can be understood by an example. A person tries to attain proficiency in the art of wrestling by constant practice. The strength and skill thus gained is in any way specially meant for his own self; it cannot be transferred to another. Similarly, if he is attached to a royal court, and there is a stipend fixed for him as a wrestler, he alone will receive it and no one else. However, in respect of the prizes and gifts that his patron may like to grant him as an appreciation for his creditable performance he may request that they may be given to his coach, or parents or some other benefactor, on his behalf. The same is the case with the virtuous

deeds their spiritual benefits are not transferable and their rewards also cannot be transferred to another, but as for their rewards and gifts he can pray to Allah that these may be granted to a near and dear one, or a benefactor of his. That is why it is termed as *isāl thawāb* (conveying of spiritual rewards) and not as *isāl jazā* (conveying of material reward).

- (2) Another form of a person's work being beneficial for another is that one should either do a virtuous deed on the desire or beckoning of another, or without his desire or beckoning, on his behalf, which in fact, was obligatory for him to carry out, but which he was unable to carry out himself. In this regard, the Hanafī jurists say that the acts of worship are of three kinds: purely physical, e.g. the Prayer; purely monetary, e.g. the *zaka* and the compound acts of bodily and monetary worship, e.g. Hajj. As for the first kind, nobody can act as an agent of another. As for the second kind, one can act as an agent of the other, e.g. the husband can pay the *zaka* due on the ornaments of the wife. As for the third kind, one can act as an agent of the other only in case the actual person on whose behalf the act is being performed, is permanently, and not just temporarily, unfit to carry out his obligation himself. For example, Hajj can be performed on behalf of another only in case the person concerned, is unable to go for Hajj himself nor may have the hope that he would ever be able to perform it himself. The Malikīs and the Shāfi'īs also concur on this. However, Imāmī Malik lays down the condition that if the father has willed that his son should perform Hajj after him, on his behalf, the son can perform Hajj on his father's behalf, otherwise not. But the traditions in this regard are very explicit. Whether the father has expressed the desire, or made a will or not, the son can perform Hajj on his behalf.

Ibn 'Abbās has related that a woman from the tribe of Khath'am said to the Holy Prophet: "The command for Hajj has reached my father at a time when he has become very old; he cannot even sit on the camel's back." The Holy Prophet replied: "You then may perform Hajj on his behalf." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidī, Nasā'ī). A tradition bearing on the same subject has also been related by Ḥadrat 'Alī (Ahmad, Tirmidī).

Ḥadrat 'Abdullah bin Zabair has made mention of a man of the same tribe of Khath'am, who also put a similar question to the Holy Prophet concerning his aged father. The Holy Prophet asked: "Are you his eldest son?" He answered in the affirmative. Thereupon the Holy Prophet said: "If your father had left behind a debt and you paid it off, would it stand paid on his behalf?" He replied that it would. The Holy Prophet said: "Then you should likewise perform Hajj also on his behalf." (Ahmad, Nasā'ī).

Ibn Abbās relates that a woman from the tribe of Juhamah came to the Holy Prophet and said: "My mother had vowed to perform Hajj but she died before performing her vow. Now, can I perform Hajj on her behalf?" The Holy Prophet replied: "If your mother had left behind a debt, would you not have paid it? Likewise, you should also discharge the vow made to Allah, and Allah has a greater right that the vows made to Him be performed." (Bukhārī, Nasa'ī). Bukhārī and Musnad Ahmad contain another tradition to the effect that a man came and put the same question to the Holy Prophet concerning his sister as has been mentioned above, and the Holy Prophet gave him also the same answer.

These traditions provide a clear proof that so far as the compound acts of bodily and monetary worship are concerned, one can act on behalf of another. As for the purely bodily acts of worship, there are some *Aḥādith* which prove the permissibility of acting on behalf of another in this kind of worship as well. For example, Ibn 'Abbās has related that a woman from the tribe of Juhamah asked the Holy Prophet: "My mother had vowed to observe the Fast and she died without performing her vow. Now, can I observe the Fast on her behalf?" The Holy Prophet replied: "Observe the Fast on her behalf." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Ahmad, Abū Da'ūd). And Ḥaḍrat Buraidah's tradition that a woman asked concerning her mother: "She had one month's (according to another tradition two months') Fasts to observe; can I observe those Fasts on her behalf?" The Holy Prophet said that she could." (Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhī, Abū Da'ūd). And Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah's tradition that the Holy Prophet said: "If a person dies and he had some Fasts to observe, his guardian should observe those Fasts on his behalf." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Ahmad). In the tradition related by Bazzār the Holy Prophet's words are to the effect: "If his guardian may so like, he may observe those Fasts on his behalf." On the basis of these very traditions the *Ashāb al-Ḥadīth* and Imām Auzā'ī and the *Zāhiris* have formed the view that one is permitted to perform bodily acts of worship also on behalf of the other. But Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Mālik, Shāfi'ī and Imām Zaid bin 'Alī have given the ruling that a fast cannot be observed on behalf of a dead person, and Imām Ahmad, Imām Lāth and Ishaq bin Rahawāh opine that this can be done only in case the deceased person might have so vowed but might not have been able to perform his vow. Those who oppose this give the argument that the reporters of the *Aḥādith*, which prove its permissibility, have themselves given their rulings against it. Ibn Abbas's ruling has been related by Nasa'ī, thus: "No one should offer a Prayer or observe a Fast on behalf of another." And Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah's ruling, according to Abdur Razzaq, is: "Do not observe the Fast on behalf of your dead ones; feed the needy instead." The same has been related from Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Umar also by Abdur Razzaq that the Fast should not be observed on behalf of the deceased person. This shows that in the beginning it was permissible to perform

acts of bodily worship on behalf of others, but the practice that became established in the end was that it was not permissible to do so; otherwise it was not possible that those who have reported these *Aḥādīth* from the Holy Prophet, should have themselves given rulings against them.

In this connection, it should be understood well that fulfilment of an obligation on behalf of another can be beneficial only to those people who have themselves been keen and desirous of fulfilling their obligations and might have been unable to do so being rendered helpless by circumstances. But a person who deliberately shirked going for Hajj although he had the necessary means for it and had no feeling whatever of this obligation in his heart either, cannot be benefited even if several Hajj be performed on his behalf afterwards. This would be analogous to the case of a person who deliberately avoided paying his debts and had no intention to pay them till the last. Afterwards even if every penny is paid off on his behalf, he would remain a debtor in the sight of Allah. The payment of the debts by another can relieve only such a person who in his lifetime was desirous of paying off his debts but was unable to do so due to straitened circumstances.

39 That is, "In the Hereafter the people's deeds shall be examined and judged in order to see what provisions they have brought with them." As this sentence occurs immediately after the preceding sentence, it by itself indicates that the preceding sentence relates to the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter, and the view of those who present it as an economic principle relating to this world is not correct. To interpret a verse of the Qur'an in a way as is irrelevant to the context as well as clashes with the other ordinances of the Qur'an cannot be right.

40 That is, "Allah provides the means both for joy and for grief. He controls good and ill luck. There is no one else in the Universe, who may have anything to do with making or marring of destinies."

41 For explanation, see E.N.'s 27 to 30 of Surah Ar Rūm, E.N. 77 of Sūrah Ash-Shūra

42 When this verse is read with the two preceding verses, the sequence by itself seems to provide the argument for the life-after-death also. The God Who has the power to give death and grant life and the God Who brings about a creature like man from an insignificant sperm-drop, rather brings about two separate sexes—male and female—from the same substance and by the same method of creation, cannot be helpless to resurrect man once again.

43 Different meanings have been given by the lexicographers and commentators of the word *agmā* as used in the original. According to Qatadah, Ibn

'Abbās took it in the meaning of *ardā* (pleased), and according to 'Ikrimah in the meaning of *qanna'a* (satisfied). According to Imām Rāzī, whatever is given to a person over and above his need and requirement is *iqnā'*. Abū 'Ubaydah and several other lexicographers have expressed the view that *aqnā* is derived from *qunya-tun*, which means lasting and secured property, e.g. the house, lands, gardens, cattle, etc. Ibn Zaid, however, has given quite a different meaning of it. He says that *aqnā* here has been used in the sense of *afqara* (made penniless), and the verse means: He made whomever He pleased rich and whomever He pleased penniless.

44. *Shi'rā* is the brightest star in the heavens, which is also known by the names of *Mirzam al-Jawzā'*, *al-Kalb al-Akbar*, *al-Kalb al-Jabbār*, *Ash-Shi'rā al-'Abīr*, etc. In English it is called Sirius, Dog Star and Canis Majoris. It is 23 times as luminous as the Sun, but as it shines over eight light-years away from the earth, it appears to be smaller and less luminous than the Sun. The Egyptians worshipped it, for it made its appearance at about the time of the season when the annual floods were beginning in the Nile; the Egyptians believed that Sirius caused the Nile floods. The pagan Arabs also held the belief that this star influenced human destinies. That is why they worshipped it as a deity, and the Banī Khuzā'ah, the neighbouring tribe of the Quraish, were particularly well-known for being its devotees. What Allah says means: Your destinies are not made and controlled by *Shi'rā* but by the Lord of *Shi'rā*.

45. 'Ād Ūlā signifies the ancient 'Ād to whom the Prophet Hūd (peace be upon him) had been appointed a Prophet. When those people were inflicted with the torment in consequence of denying the Prophet Hūd, the believers only escaped the punishment. Their descendants are called 'Ād Ukhrā, or the later 'Ād, in history.

46. "The subdued settlements": the settlements of the people of Lot, and "covered them that which covered them" probably imply the waters of the Dead Sea, which spread over their settlements after they had sunk underground, and cover the region even till this day.

47. According to some commentators this sentence also is a part of the resume of the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses, and according to others it ended with *Fa-ghashshā-hu mā ghashshā*, and with this begins a new theme. According to the context, however, the first view seems to be preferable, for the following words "This is a warning of the warnings already given," point out that the whole preceding passage is "of the warnings already given", which had been sent down in the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses.

48. The word *tatamāra*, as used in the Text, means both to doubt and to wrangle. The address is directed to every listener. To every person who may be listening to this discourse, it is being said: Even after witnessing what has been the fate in human history of denying the bounties of Allah and of wrangling with the Prophets concerning them, will you still commit the same folly? What the former peoples had doubted was whether the bounties and blessings they were enjoying in the world, had been bestowed by One God, or by other associates of His, or by no one, but had become available by themselves. On account of this they wrangled with the Prophets. The Prophets asserted that all these blessings had been granted to them by God, and by One God alone; therefore, they should be grateful to Him and should serve Him alone; but the people did not believe this and wrangled with the Prophets on this very count. Now, O man: "Don't you see in history what fate these nations met for entertaining this doubt and for their wrangling? Will you entertain the same doubt and indulge in the same wrangling as proved disastrous for others?"

In this connection, one should also bear in mind that the 'Ad and the Thamud and the people of Noah had passed long before the Prophet Abraham, and the people of Lot had met with the torment during his own lifetime. Therefore, there can be no difficulty in regarding this passage as a part of the resume of the Prophet Abraham's Books.

49. The words in the original are: *Hādha nadhūr-un-min-an-nadhur-il-ilā*. The commentators have expressed three points of view in the explanation of this sentence. First, that *nadhūr* here implies the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace); second, that it implies the Qur'ān; third, that it implies the fate of the peoples already destroyed, which has been referred to in the foregoing verses. In view of the context, we are of the opinion that this last commentary is preferable.

50. That is, "Do not be under the delusion that there is yet enough time for thinking and consideration; therefore, you may not give immediate and serious attention to these things and may not decide that you should accept them without further delay. Nay: no one among you knows how much of the respite of life is left to him. Any one of you can die at any time and the Last Hour can also take place suddenly. Therefore, do not think that the Hour of Judgement is yet far off. Whoever has any concern for the Hereafter, should mend his ways forthwith, for one may not have a chance to take a second breath after the present breath."

51. That is, when the Hour of Judgement does arrive, you will not be able to stop it, nor your deities other than Allah have the power to avert it. Allah alone can stop it but He will not.

52. The word *hādih-al-Hadīth* as used in the original, signifies the whole teaching that was being presented in the Qur'an through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) and "marvel" implies the marvel that man expresses on hearing a novel and incredible thing. The verse means this: "That to which Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) is inviting you is the same that you have already heard. Now, is it this very thing at which you marvel and feel alarmed, and express wonder as if something very strange and novel was being presented before you?"

53. That is, "Instead of weeping at your ignorance and deviation you, on the contrary, are mocking the Truth".

54. Two meanings have been given of the word *sāmidīn* by the lexicographers. Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah and Abū 'Ubaydah, the grammarian, are of the view that in the Yamanite tongue *sūūd* means singing and playing, and the verse alludes that the disbelievers of Makkah, in order to suppress the recitation of the Qur'an and to divert the people's attention away from it, would start singing in a loud voice. The other meaning of it given by Ibn 'Abbās and Mujāhid is: "*Sūūd* means bending down the head out of arrogance; when the disbelievers of Makkah passed by the Holy Prophet, they would pass by him angrily with their faces lifted up." Rāghib Isfahānī in his *Mufradāt* also has adopted the same meaning; accordingly, Qatādah has translated *sāmidān* into *ghāfilun* and Sa'īd bin Jubair into *mu'ridūn*.

55. According to Imām Abū Hanīfah, Imām Shāfi'ī and many other scholars it is obligatory to perform a *sajdah* on the recitation of this verse. Although Imām Mālik himself used to perform a *sajdah* here (as cited by Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī in *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*), yet he held the view that it was not obligatory to perform a *sajdah* here, the basis of his view being this tradition of Hadrat Zaid bin Thābit: "I recited Sūrah an-Najm before the Holy Prophet, and he did not perform a *sajdah*." (Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Abū Da'ūd, Nasa'ī). But this *Hadīth* does not negate the incumbency of the prostration here, for it is likely that the Holy Prophet did not perform the *sajdah* then due to some reason but might have performed it later. Other traditions on the subject are explicit that the prostration was always performed on this verse. Hadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Abbas and Muḥalib bin Abī Wadā'ah have unanimously stated that when the Holy Prophet recited this Sūrah for the first time in the Ka'bah, he had prostrated himself and along with him the whole assembly of the believers and the disbelievers also had fallen down prostrate. (Bukhārī, Aḥmad, Nasa'ī) Ibn 'Umar has reported that the Holy Prophet recited Sūrah an-Najm in the Prayer and prostrated himself and lay long in that state. (Baihaqī, Ibn Mardūyah). Saburat al-

Juhani states that Ḥaḍrat 'Umar recited Sūrah an-Najm in the Fajr Prayer and performed a *sajdah*, then stood up, recited Sūrah al-Zilzāl and performed the *rukū'*. (Sa'īd bin Mansūr). Imām Mālik himself has related this act of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar in his *Mu'awwiz* (*Bāb Mā jā 'ī Sujūd al-Qar'ān*).